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AFSN PA1401034190C
DDAT 900114

SLIN (Clandestine) Radio Venceremos in Spanish to El Salvador 0027 GMT 14 Jan 90

REF PA1301231490 and add San Salvador Domestic Spanish 132100 -- Cristiani Names Suspects in Jesuit Case

SUBJ TAKE ALL-- Report on Cristiani 'Plan' in Jesuits Case
Full Text Superzone of Message

- 1 [Text] Attention, local and international press, we will now present a report revealing Cristiani's plan to try to cover up the assassination of the Jesuit priests.
- 2 At noon on 11 January, we carried a report on this plan, and 3 hours before [words indistinct] appeared on a national radio and television network. We will now present a report, which -- we repeat -- reveals Cristiani's plan to let go unpunished the assassination of the Jesuit priests. This is a report we presented 3 hours before Cristiani appeared on a radio and television network.
- 3 The 72-hour deadline set by Alfredo Cristiani to reveal the names of the military personnel who assassinated the Jesuit priests and their two maids has passed, and extensive information has been circulating among diplomatic, political, and journalistic circles on the version the government wants to present. Cristiani will not reveal the truth. Along with La Tandonia [reference to the 1966 graduating class of the Captain General Gerardo Barrios Military Academy -- FBIS], he has drafted a version to try to clear the Armed Forces General Staff command of all responsibility and to place the blame for this at the level of executive command.
- 4 Cristiani will try to present the assassination of the priests as being the result of a circumstantial operational error. According to the version drafted by the Armed Forces General Staff and by Cristiani, on the night of 16 November, Atlacatl Battalion troops had been sent to the UCA [Central American University -- FBIS] to conduct a routine search. During the operation, a soldier incidentally became involved in a heated argument with Salvadoran Priest Joaquin Lopez Lopez, during which he shot the priest, killing him instantly.
- 5 According to the story the Army General Staff and Cristiani are preparing, this unforeseeable action would have complicated the routine search. Therefore, the leader of the patrol decided to eliminate all the priests and their two maids so as not to leave witnesses.
- 6 This is what President Cristiani and the Army's General Staff are preparing as their defense. To [words indistinct] this version, Cristiani [words indistinct] guessed the declarations made by the witness who testified about the last words of the late Father Martin Baro at the time of the crime. Baro was heard shouting: This is unjust!
- 7 According to the version Cristiani is preparing, Atlacatl Battalion soldiers reported the incident to General Guillermo Benavides, director of the military academy; and to Lieutenant Colonel Camilo Hernandez of the military academy, who in turn notified other officers, including Colonel Armando Aviles, chief of the G-5 of the General Staff. For reasons of personal self-interest, Col Armando Aviles passed this information confidentially to U.S. Ambassador William Walker.
- 8 The facts, their implications, and the drafting of this version of the story generated heated arguments between the members of the General Staff, the U.S. Embassy, and Cristiani. Ultimately, the media learned about these arguments, and in view of the imminent publication of this situation in the media, Alfredo Cristiani was forced to admit in a hurry and to openly acknowledge the involvement of the military in the assassination of the Jesuits.
- 9 PA1401034190TAKE1
- 10 [Text] The main reason for coming up with this version was to [words indistinct] masterminds of the crime [words indistinct] to find out who the perpetrators were. With this version, Cristiani and the High Command are trying to come up with extenuating circumstances for the trial and to

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Date 1 MAY 1984

place the responsibility for the assassination of the Jesuits on mid-level military officers. The colonels who were involved in the crime could be set free and their responsibility would only be related to the fact that the crime was committed within an area under their command.

11 This version of the crime is aimed at leaving the Armed Forces High Command free from any responsibility and to only slightly touch the members of La Tandonia, especially Col Orlando Cepeda, who was the one who signed the order to assassinate the Jesuits, and Col Rene Emilio Ponce, chief of staff. Col Guillermo Benavides, who is a member of little importance within La Tandonia, was indirectly involved in the crime.

12 However, the [word indistinct] is self-evident. The decision to carry out an operation to kill popular and religious democratic leaders was made by the general staff of the Armed Forces [words indistinct] 4 days after the FMLN offensive began. This operation was part of a complete counteroffensive plan of the Armed Forces, which included the massive use of all the firepower of the Air Force against poor neighborhoods and the killing of democratic people's movement and church leaders.

13 Alfredo Cristiani, who was taken to the headquarters of the general staff for security reasons and assumed control of the defense plan, was fully aware of the genocide plan. U.S. officers and advisers were also at the general staff headquarters at the time to discuss and approve this genocide plan.

14 The plan was implemented on the evening of 16 November. All labor union offices in San Salvador were looted. The offices of humanitarian organizations, political parties, and religious centers were also looted.

15 The plan was implemented at the installations of the UCA. The days that followed saw a continuation of the arrests, persecutions, and assassinations. The offices of all the [words indistinct] were attacked. Its leaders were forced to seek refuge or to leave the country to escape this manhunt. This is a policy for which the High Command and Alfredo Cristiani are directly responsible. [Words indistinct] The U.S. Ambassador and U.S. Embassy personnel are fully aware of this.

16 The need to come up with this version comes from the precarious predicament that the government and the Armed Forces have found themselves in in view of the debates taking place in the U.S. Congress to decide the fate of aid to El Salvador, which is linked to the results of the investigation of the assassination of the Jesuit priests on 16 November. (Endall) 140027 [REDACTED] 1301.20e 14/0347z jan

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